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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000653

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MY](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: RAZALI VISIT TO RANGOON

REF: A. STATE 15026

[B](#). KUALA LUMPUR 03417

[C](#). KUALA LUMPUR 03382

Classified By: COM CARMEN MARTINEZ FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Post continues in its conviction that Special Envoy (SE) Razali should not come to Rangoon absent firm assurances that he will be allowed a meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi. However, we understand that the SE is still undecided. If Razali chooses to come without guarantees of any kind (the regime has said quite publicly "it is up to him"), then he needs to know that he is expected to stand up to Than Shwe and not fold as he did last time. It is time for tough talk, not soft words and ASEAN-style diplomacy. This needs to be conveyed to the Special Envoy in a very clear and forthright manner. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Post continues in its conviction (in line with Department, Ref A) that Special Envoy (SE) Razali should not come to Rangoon absent firm assurances that he will be allowed a meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi. However, we understand that the SE is still undecided (Ref B) as to his course of action and may be considering the scenario outlined in para 2, Ref C - coming to Rangoon even if the regime holds firm on no ASSK contact. In this hypothetical scenario Razali would arrive June 6 and present a formal request to see ASSK. If the SPDC refuses his request, Razali would leave Rangoon immediately, making public the reasons for his early departure. Granted, this might allow the SE more options and keep the regime from claiming that Razali, not the GOB, had scuttled the visit.

[1](#)3. (C) The question mark in this hypothetical scenario is Razali's resolve in the face of senior general Than Shwe's intransigent dictatorial style. It should be remembered that on Razali's last visit in November 2002, he complied with Than Shwe's demands that the SE not go to Shan State to meet with ASSK on one of her political trips. It should also be recalled that Than Shwe gave the SE a paltry 10-15 minutes of his time on the last visit, and there is no indication that there will be a more substantive meeting, or any meeting at all, this time.

[1](#)4. (C) In addition, Razali's mentor Prime Minister Mahatir steps down in October 2003 and Razali's influence will wane in proportion (I posited this idea to the Malaysian Ambassador in a meeting with other ASEAN and EU ambassador's - he agreed that Razali's clout is tied to his mentor's status as Prime Minister). As Razali has maintained his business ties to the regime (his company has the contract for the new Burmese passports), and Mahatir's clout will be waning with the regime, Razali will be wary of really confronting Than Shwe and leaving in a manner that would burn his bridges behind him.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: If Razali chooses to come without guarantees of any kind (the regime has said quite publicly "it is up to him"), then he needs to know that he is expected to stand up to Than Shwe and not fold as he did last time (and as PM Mahatir did in August of 2002 when he cancelled his visit to ASSK because he "wanted to be a good guest"). The discouraging developments of the past week have changed the focus of the Special Envoy's role from that of facilitating a political dialogue to making Than Shwe give tangible proof of the regime's oft-stated commitment to national reconciliation. It is time for tough talk, not soft words and ASEAN-style diplomacy. This needs to be conveyed to the Special Envoy in a very clear and forthright manner. End Comment.  
Martinez